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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
10 March 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
10 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

Internal Developments in South Vietnam

1. Political feuding among military and civilian groups is continuing to hamper the development of effective government in Saigon. Premier Quat, who is working on programs designed to project a more favorable government image in the provinces, has complained that his time and energies are constantly diverted by the need to keep close tabs on the political maneuvers of the military and by efforts to keep Buddhist and Catholic political activities within bounds.

2. Quat has indicated concern over reported plans of the generals to meet shortly to remove both General "Little" Minh and General Thieu from positions of responsibility. He is also considering steps, including a still vague proposal of a US/South Vietnamese joint military command, by which he might apply a brake on the political activities of the military.

3. The Viet Cong Liberation Front in a clandestine broadcast on 8 March flatly rejected the notion that the US can successfully exert military pressure to gain a strong position "in the final round" for a political solution in South Vietnam. The broadcast described the landing of US marines as a "planned" expansion of the war, but "no threat to the heroic Vietnamese people." Possibly foreshadowing increased Communist propaganda efforts to drive a wedge between the US and South Vietnamese, the Front stated that the presence of the marines would merely "increase the resentment of 30 million Vietnamese people and intensify the latter's will to unite and knock them out." The Front also claimed

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that Socialist countries will increase their aid
"in a more realistic manner" to help defeat the US.

Viet Cong Military Activity

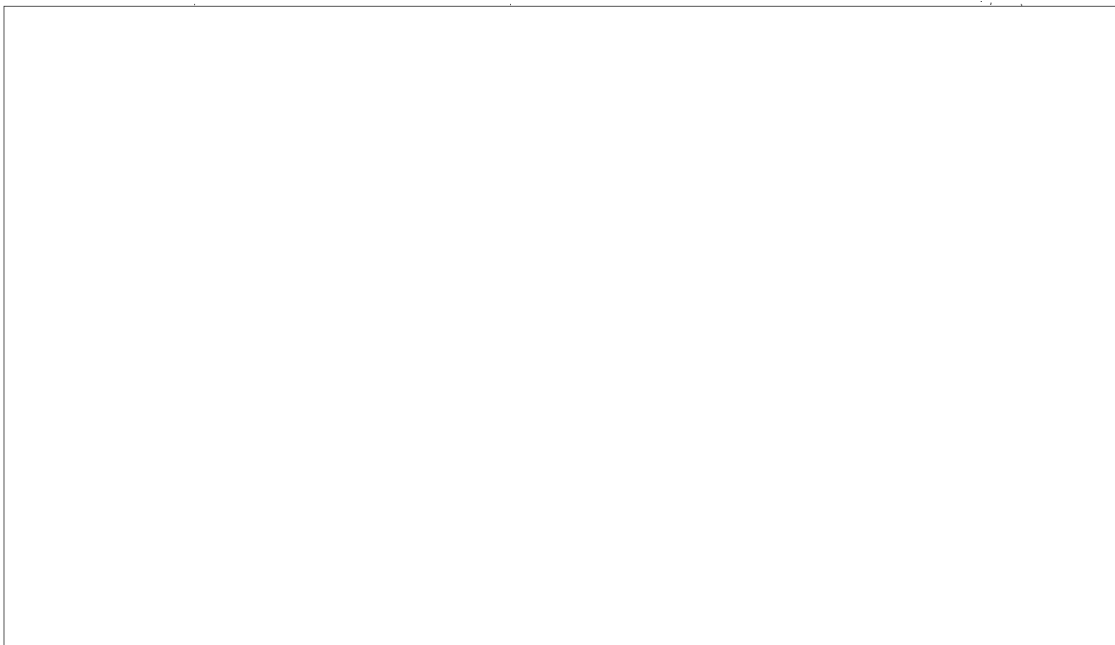
4. The Viet Cong remain active throughout the countryside. In troubled Binh Dinh Province, one US adviser was killed and another wounded yesterday in a Communist attack on a government convoy. Elsewhere in the central highlands, Viet Cong propagandists have been entering tribal hamlets and warning of forthcoming attacks on population centers, including both district and provincial capitals. According to press reports, two Viet Cong squads clashed briefly today with government forces three miles from the beach at Da Nang. There were no reported casualties and no US marines were involved.

5. [REDACTED] has picked up a report, attributed to a Vietnamese businessman in Saigon, that the latter's family in Da Nang had been warned by the Viet Cong to leave the area because of possible Viet Cong operations against military installations there. The alleged Communist warning, made prior to the arrival in Da Nang of US marine contingents, is of uncertain validity in view of the roundabout sourcing and may be another example of Communist propaganda tactics.

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Communist Political Developments

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9. The Chinese Communists are attempting to exploit the situation in Vietnam by telling left-wing African leaders that Moscow has sold out to the US.

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[REDACTED] the Chinese underscored their determination to push the Communist advantage in Vietnam to the limit and specifically charged the Soviets with seeking to help the US extricate itself from a "losing" situation.

10. The Chinese expressed astonishment at Kosygin's alleged statement during talks in Peiping that the Americans should be given an opportunity to withdraw from Vietnam in a way which would "save face" for the US. They claimed that the Soviet premier agreed with their view that Vietnam was a "quicksand" for US forces, and attributed his desire for a solution which would permit the US to salvage a measure of international respect to the fact that both the US and the USSR were wealthy states.

11. Current Chinese propaganda has been making the same points less explicitly. Recent broadcasts display arrogant certainty of Communist victory and Peiping's statements concerning the situation in Vietnam assert that the US faces a choice between ultimate military defeat and unconditional withdrawal. The Chinese have implied that the Soviets were abetting US attempts to force a negotiated settlement by increased military pressure--a form of "blackmail" which the Chinese declare is doomed to fail.

12. A number of low-ranking Soviet officials--who probably intended their remarks for US consumption--have stressed in recent conversations with Western representatives the dilemma which now confronts the Soviet Union. They have argued that Moscow is under heavy pressure to assist the DRV with military equipment, but appear to go out of their way to assure that the extent of such aid will not jeopardize relations with the US.

13. These sources have emphasized Soviet frustrations with the Vietnam crisis and attempt to place most of the blame on the Chinese Communists. One Soviet official, in a talk the day following the 4 March demonstration in Moscow against the US Embassy, claimed that the incident took place against the wishes of the Soviet government and was a source of "acute embarrassment." He intimated that the demonstration was whipped up by Chinese students and accurately predicted that Peiping would exploit the affair for its own advantage.

14. A Pravda editorial today characterized the landing of US marines in South Vietnam as "a case of direct invasion by American troops of the territory of another country." Pravda suggested that if the US is "burning with the desire" to defend freedom, it should send the marines to Alabama to defend the rights of American negroes.

15. Poland is re-examining its role as a member of the ICC in Vietnam and may be attempting to mediate an agreed position on Vietnam between Britain and the USSR--the Geneva Conference co-chairmen. The Polish Ambassadors to Britain and China are home this week and have been received by top party and government leaders. There are rumors that Foreign Minister Rapacki is in Moscow talking about the British and French proposals vis-a-vis Vietnam. He may also be discussing Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to England next week in this context.

16. Yugoslavia's President Tito has called a conference of nonaligned states' ambassadors resident in Belgrade for 11 March to work out a joint appeal for an international conference on the Vietnam crisis.

23 countries so far have agreed to

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[REDACTED]

attend the meeting. Tito favors a Geneva-type conference with no preconditions. He apparently proposed the ambassadorial meeting in letters to various nonaligned leaders during the past few days.

Communist Military Developments

17. There have been no unusual movements of Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese forces detected within the past 24 hours.

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